

Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

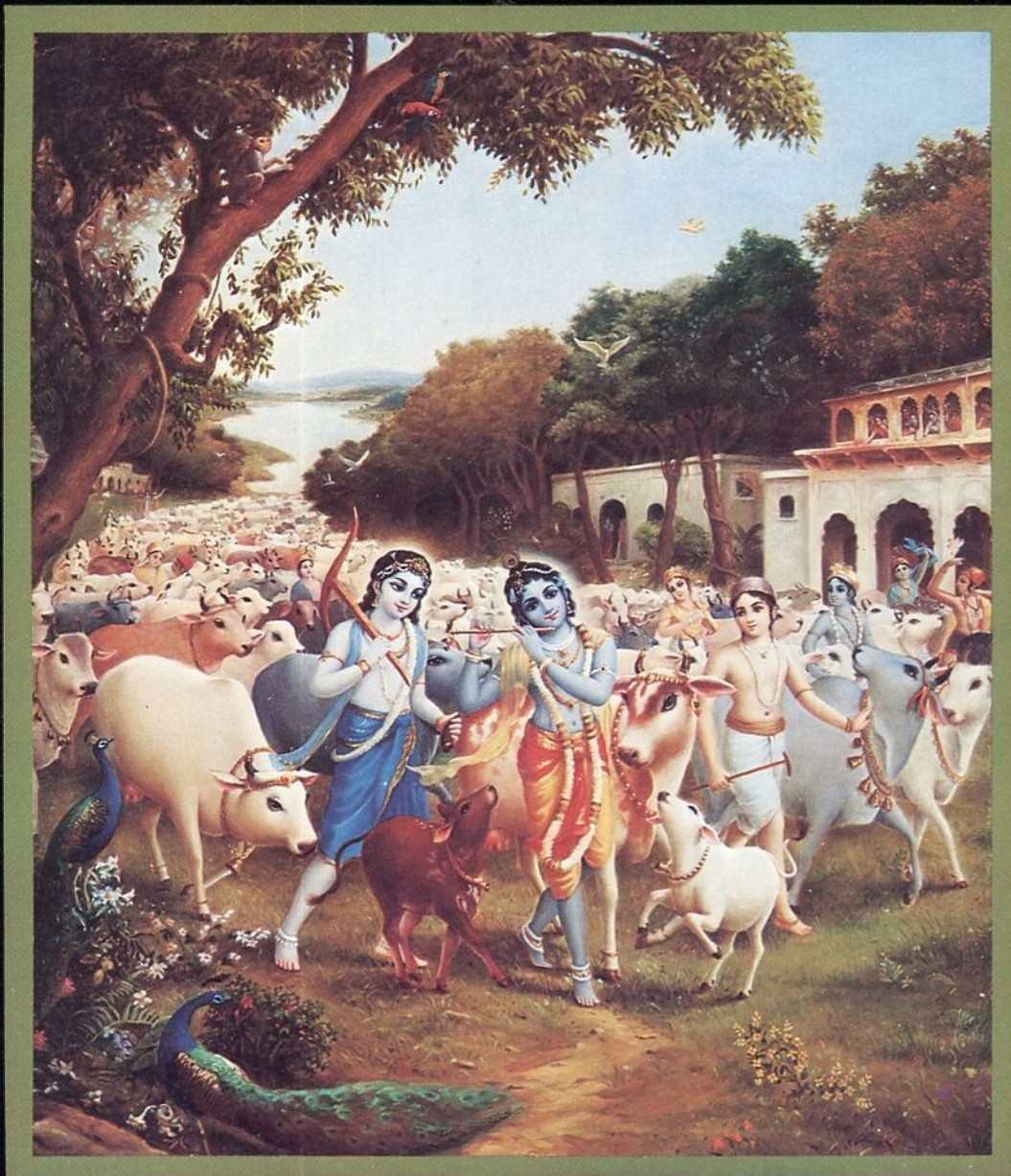


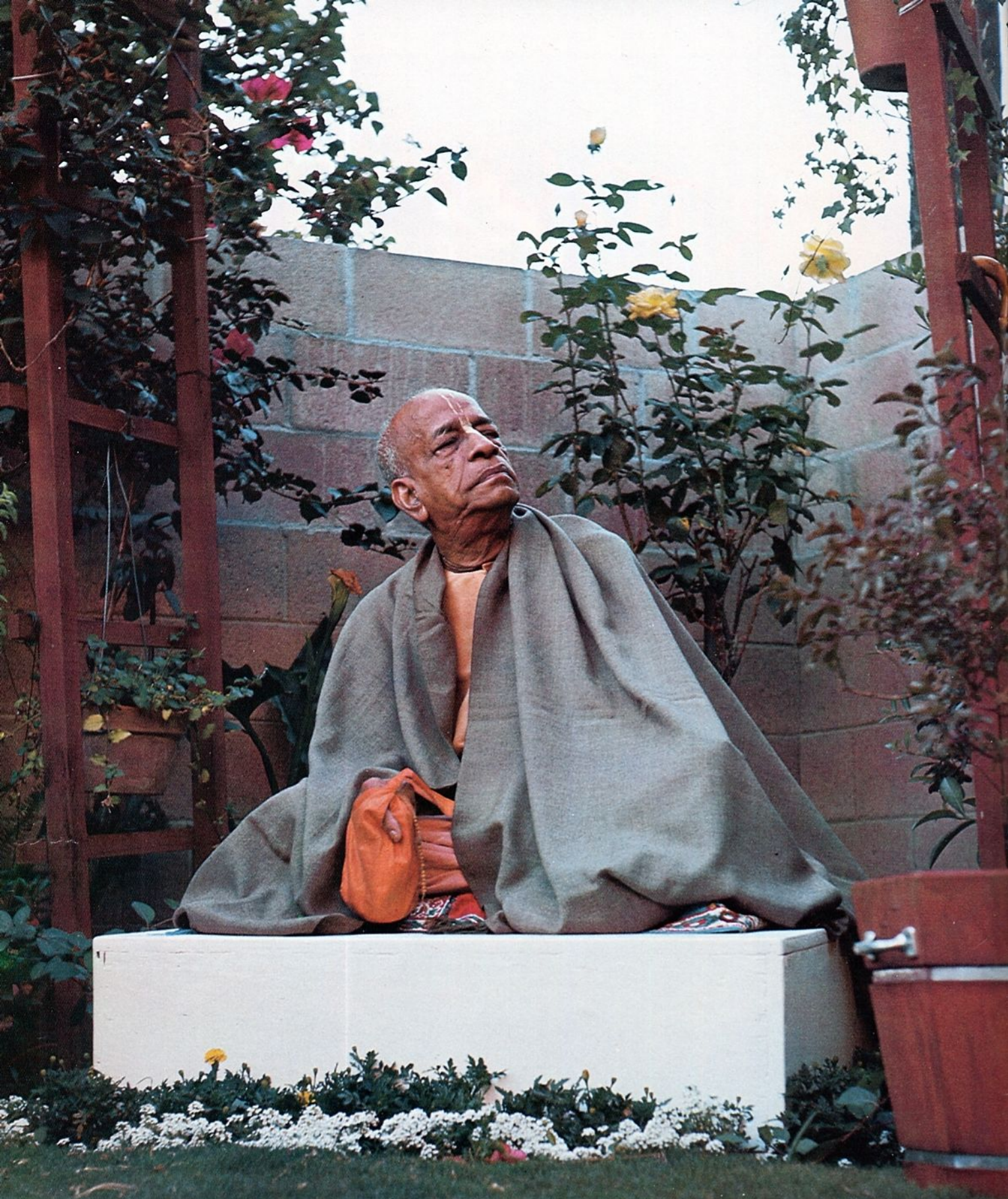
BACK TO GODHEAD



Vol.10 No.2

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT





His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness



Left: The San Juan center of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Below: Chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra in San Juan.

IN SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO
AND AROUND THE WORLD
HARE KṚṢṂA
HARE KṚṢṂA
KṚṢṂA KṚṢṂA
HĀRE HĀRE
HARE RĀMA
HARE RĀMA
RĀMA RĀMA
HARE HARE



Bright sunshine, beautiful beaches, cool ocean breezes—it's no wonder that tourists flock to Puerto Rico. But if Puerto Rico is so alluring, we can just try to appreciate how attractive is the person who created Puerto Rico. That person is Kṛṣṇa, or God.

It's natural for people to travel to beautiful places because as spiritual beings we all originally belong in the most beautiful place, Kṛṣṇa's abode, the spiritual world, as pictured on the cover of this month's BACK TO GODHEAD. We need not work very hard to get material happiness, because a certain amount of happiness comes to everyone automatically, just as everyone has to suffer a certain amount of pain, even though he doesn't want it. So even in the most pleasing retreats in the material world, one cannot be completely happy because material happiness is always tainted by material distress. One who is intelligent, therefore, should try for the pure form of happiness that one cannot find even if he wanders all over the material world.

In New York the airlines advertise, "Enjoy peaceful Puerto Rico." And in Puerto Rico they say, "Find satisfaction in New York." But, really, going from one place to another in this material world won't help us find the peace we want. That peace is within us, and we can find it, even at home, when we go beyond the boundaries of material consciousness and revive our eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

The easiest way to revive our relationship with Kṛṣṇa is by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, the holy names of Kṛṣṇa—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Try it and see! There are no hard and fast rules for chanting this *mantra*; even a child can take part in it. Yet Kṛṣṇa consciousness also offers a complete spiritual philosophy that can satisfy even the most adamantly doubting intellectual. Therefore, in San Juan and throughout the world, people searching for the kind of happiness and knowledge that can't be found in the material world are finding it in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You'll find out more about how and why in the pages of this BACK TO GODHEAD.

BACK TO GODHEAD

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT

FOUNDER

(under the direction of His Divine Grace
Sri Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda)

His Divine Grace

A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda

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PRONUNCIATION OF SANSKRIT WORDS

Sanskrit words and names in *Back to Godhead* are spelled according to a system that scholars throughout the world use to show how to pronounce each word. Vowels in Sanskrit are pronounced almost as in Italian. The sound of the short *a* is like the *u* in but. The long *ā* is like the *a* in far and held twice as long as the short *a*, and *e* is like the *a* in evade. Long *ī* is like the *i* in pique. The vowel *ṛ* is pronounced like the *er* in the English word fiber. The *ṛ* is pronounced as in the English word chair. The aspirated consonants (*ch*, *jh*, *dh*, etc.) are pronounced as in staunch-heart, hedge-hog and red-hot. The two aspirates *ś* and *ṣ* are like the English *sh* and *s* is like the *s* in sun. So pronounce *Kṛṣṇa* as KRISHNA and *Caitanya* as CHAITANYA.

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For information on how you can become a registered member of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, please write to the Society's secretary at 3764 Watseka Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90034.



ON THE COVER

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, plays His flute and herds the cows in the spiritual world with His brother, Balarāma. The Vedic writings describe that in that world all the land is touchstone, all water is nectar, every word is a song and every gait a dance. One who is fully Kṛṣṇa conscious can enter that spiritual world.

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His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda

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LOVE BEYOND SURRENDER

by His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

The position, the special attractions and the opulences of Kṛṣṇa can be understood only by devotional service (*bhakti*). If we wish to gain the favor of a great personality, we must satisfy him by our service. Even in this material world, one cannot understand a great man by speculation alone. If we wish to understand what a great man is, we have to satisfy him with our service, friendship and love, and he will disclose what he has to offer us. *Bhakti* is a similar process. If we wish to know Kṛṣṇa, His opulences and His special features, as well as His special attractive qualities, we must understand Him through this process of devotional service called Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Indeed, in the last chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa Himself says:

*bhaktiṃ māṃ abhijānāti
yāvān yaś cāsmi tattvataḥ
tato māṃ tattvato jñātva
viśate tad-anantaram*

“One can understand the Supreme Personality as He is only by devotional service. And when one is in full consciousness of the Supreme Lord by such devotion, he can enter the kingdom of God.” (Bg. 18.55)



In the Seventh Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

*manuṣyānām sahasreṣu
kaścīd yatati siddhaye
yatatām api siddhānām
kaścīn mām vetti tattvataḥ*

“Out of many thousands among men, one may endeavor for perfection, and of those who have achieved perfection, hardly one knows Me in truth.” (Bg. 7.3)

In other words, the vast majority of men are engaged in the animal propensities to eat, sleep, be merry, enjoy and mate a little. Of millions of these, only one will strive to know Kṛṣṇa as He is, and of millions of these, only one will succeed. Only those who have attained perfection can understand what Kṛṣṇa actually is. That perfection and understanding can be attained by *bhakti*, devotion, as indicated also in the Eleventh Chapter:

*bhaktiḥ tv ananyayā śakya
aham evaṁ-vidho 'rjuna
jñātuṁ draṣṭuṁ ca tattvena
praveṣṭuṁ ca parantapa*

“My dear Arjuna, only by undivided devotional service can I be understood as I am, standing before you, and can thus be seen directly. Only in this way can you enter the mysteries of My understanding.” (Bg. 11.54)

The Most Charitable Personality

One can enter the abode of Kṛṣṇa when one understands perfectly what Kṛṣṇa is. Of course one cannot understand Kṛṣṇa perfectly, but only insofar as one's capacity to understand Him. The understanding must be of Kṛṣṇa as He actually is (*tattvataḥ*). Otherwise, there is no entrance into His abode. Lord Caitanya instructed Sanātana Gosvāmī about Kṛṣṇa through devotional service, and His instructions are very important. We should understand and note them as much as we do *Bhagavad-gītā*. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa gives instructions directly to Arjuna about fruitive activity, philosophical speculation and the *yoga* system. Ultimately, however, Kṛṣṇa instructed Arjuna, *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*: “Give up all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me.” (Bg. 18.66) Lord Caitanya, however, by His special blessings, gives what even Kṛṣṇa did not give, what

Kṛṣṇa hesitated to give, for Kṛṣṇa knew that if He spoke of abandonment of duty (*dharma*) and total surrender unto Him in the very beginning of *Bhagavad-gītā*, Arjuna would not accept it. Actually it was not necessary to elaborately go through so many phases of instructions in *Bhagavad-gītā*, for the most confidential instruction was that Arjuna give up everything and just surrender unto Him. Although this is the actual instruction of *Bhagavad-gītā*, it was not spoken in the beginning. This is because there are many types of human beings, and the paths of *jñāna* and *yoga* are required for them. The special mercy of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, however, is that He directly gives this highest instruction. What Kṛṣṇa could not give directly on the battlefield is given directly by Lord Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, Kṛṣṇa in His incarnation as Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Therefore Lord Caitanya is considered the most munificent, the most charitable personality. Indeed, Rūpa Gosvāmī offered his respects to Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu in this way.

*namo mahā-vadānyāya
kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-
nāmne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ*

“I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, who is more magnanimous than any other *avatāra*, even Kṛṣṇa Himself, because He is bestowing freely what no one else has ever given—pure love of Kṛṣṇa.”

To understand Kṛṣṇa is very difficult, and many great scholars, philosophers and personalities are frustrated in their attempts, but Caitanya Mahāprabhu is so merciful and magnanimous that He is directly offering *kṛṣṇa-prema*, love of Kṛṣṇa.

Blind Faith Rejected

The way of receiving knowledge of Kṛṣṇa is also indicated by Sanātana Gosvāmī. He fell at the feet of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and said, “My dear Lord, I have simply wasted my time by trying to gratify my senses. That is my only qualification. I belong to the lowest class of men, and my associates are also of the lowest type. I have fallen, and I am the lowest of all. These are my

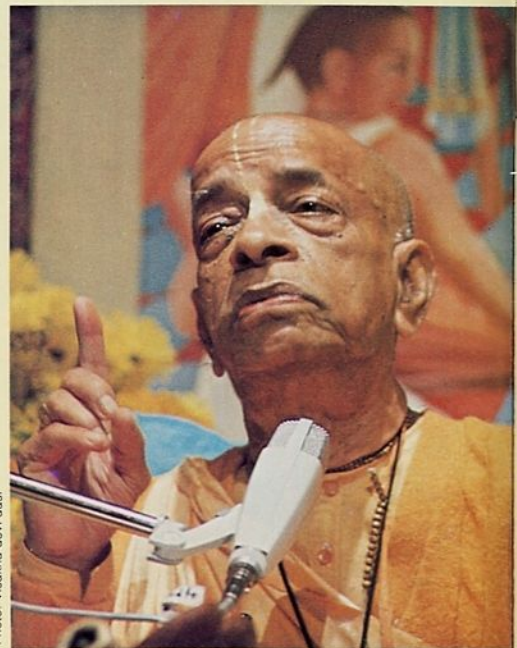


Photo: Viskhā-devi dāsi

qualifications.” In actuality Sanātana Gosvāmī belonged to a high-caste *brāhmaṇa* family, but because he accepted service in the Moslem government, he did not consider himself a *brāhmaṇa*. Traditionally, *brāhmaṇas* would never accept service of any type—they would starve first. Because Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī accepted service, they were considered to be outside the *brāhmaṇa* community. Although the social conditions at that time were very strict, Caitanya Mahāprabhu accepted Sanātana Gosvāmī and Rūpa Gosvāmī.

We should not think, however, that Sanātana Gosvāmī's position was unique. Nor should we consider ourselves as belonging to this community or that community, for in any case we have all fallen from our eternal position. When approaching a spiritual master, one should not be puffed up by his so-called qualifications. One should forget whatever nonsense he has learned and approach the spiritual master as a blind slave. This is the qualification. One must set aside his conceptions of “I believe,” and “I think,” and “I cannot.” Thus Sanātana Gosvāmī is indicating that because he is simply absorbed with the animal propensities of eating, sleeping, mating and defending, because he has fallen from his eternal position, because he is ostracized and his association is low, and because he has wasted his time, he does not know what is actually



beneficial to him. This is his statement, although he was very aristocratic and was a learned Sanskrit scholar.

This is not a case of false humility, for Sanātana Gosvāmī was a devotee, and unless he actually felt something to be so, he would not say it. Although Sanātana Gosvāmī was called a *paṇḍita*, a learned man, he did not feel that he deserved this title, because he did not know the goal of life. Our nature is that although we may be fool number one, if someone addresses us as a learned person, we accept it. This is our illusion: we never accept ourselves as a fool, but think, "Who can be greater than me? I can think for myself. What is the need of a spiritual master? I can become a religious leader, I can become such and such." This is our mentality, but this mentality should be sacrificed before approaching a spiritual master. First one must select a spiritual master, and this requires some knowledge, and then when one is sure that the spiritual master is bona fide, he should offer himself submissively. When Sanātana Gosvāmī first met Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, he did not surrender himself, but after hearing Him he realized the greatness of His message and then submitted himself. This then is the process. There is no question of blind faith.

Knowledge Through Devotion

Throughout *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa emphasizes the importance of understanding Him in truth, and it is Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu who bestows this knowledge of Kṛṣṇa through the process of love and devotion. Simply understanding that there is God is not sufficient; we must understand God in fact. Nor is it sufficient to consider God our order supplier. Kṛṣṇa must be known in truth (*tattvena*), and it is Lord Caitanya who explains Him in truth. As mentioned before, it is not possible to understand God to the fullest extent, but to the extent of our human capabilities. Kṛṣṇa has explained about Himself in *Bhagavad-gītā*, and that is sufficient, but Caitanya Mahāprabhu offers even more information. Of all of the activities of the living entity, Kṛṣṇa is both the enjoyer and the master, but those who are not aware of this fall down from their true relationship with Him:

*aham hi sarva-yajñānām
bhoktā ca prabhur eva ca
na tu mām abhijānanti
tattvenāśa cyavanti te*

"I am the only enjoyer and the only object of sacrifice. Those who do not recognize My true transcendental nature fall down." (Bg. 9.24)

Throughout *Bhagavad-gītā* we find that Kṛṣṇa says, "Just surrender to Me, and I will give you all protection." Lord Caitanya, as Kṛṣṇa Himself in the role of a devotee, goes further in His explanation. He advises surrender, but in addition He explains the activities following surrender. Following surrender, there is worship, and the proper process for worship is described by Lord Caitanya and His immediate followers, especially Rūpa Gosvāmī.

The impersonalists, or Māyāvādīs, contend that God has no form, that He is impersonal, and that therefore it is necessary to imagine a form of the Godhead in order to render worship or to meditate upon Him. However, this is refuted by Kṛṣṇa. We should not think of God as void or impersonal, nor should we simply imagine a form of Him, nor should we worship demigods or spirits. All of this is discouraged in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

*yānti deva-vratā devān
pitṛn yānti pitṛ-vratāḥ
bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā
yānti mad-yājino 'pi mām*

"Those who worship the demigods will take birth among the demigods; those who worship ghosts and spirits will take birth among such beings; those who worship ancestors go to the ancestors; and those who worship Me will live with Me." (Bg. 9.25)

Beyond The Material Universe

We have freedom of action, and God rewards us the results—whatever we want. If we worship material things, then we attain them. In other words, we remain on the material platform life after life. If we worship highly elevated living entities (the demigods) then we go to the worlds of these beings. Similarly, if we worship our ancestors, we will go to their worlds also. And if we wish to go to the planet where Kṛṣṇa resides, known as Goloka Vṛndāvana, we have to worship Kṛṣṇa. This is cer-

tainly not unreasonable; if we wish to attain a particular destination, we must purchase a ticket for that destination and not another. *Bhagavad-gītā* explains that the planet of Kṛṣṇa is different from others, for when one attains it he has no longer to return to this material world.

*ābrahma-bhuvanāl lokāḥ
punar āvartino 'rjuna
mām upetya tu kaunteya
punar janma na vidyate*

"From the highest planet in the material world down to the lowest, all are places of misery wherein repeated birth and death take place. But one who attains to My abode, O son of Kuntī, never takes birth again." (Bg. 8.16)

Regardless of where we go in this material world—even to the highest planets—we have to return, sometimes to a higher position, and sometimes to a lower. Just as the soul transmigrates from one body to another, it also transmigrates from one planet to another. We should attempt to go to that realm from which we do not have to return, and that is known as the realm of Vaikuṇṭha, the spiritual sky, which is beyond the material universe. If we remain always in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, our transfer to that planet of Kṛṣṇa is guaranteed. It is a question of practice, for the mental condition that prevails at the time of death determines the form of body one acquires in the next life. Just as we have to prepare for examinations in an ordinary school, we also have to prepare for the examination known as death. If we at all want to transfer ourselves to that planet known as Kṛṣṇaloka, *cintāmaṇi-dhāma*, then we have to practice. The human life is specifically meant for the practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Those who are even apprentices in this realm are already considered liberated, just as a sincere student who is preparing himself for his examinations may already be considered to have passed them. In other words, he prepares himself so thoroughly that his passing of the examination is guaranteed.

The method of preparing for the examination of death, the method of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, is outlined by Kṛṣṇa in this way:

*yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi
yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat*



yat tapasyasi kaunteya
tat kuruṣva mad arpaṇam

"O son of Kuntī, all that you do, all that you eat, all that you offer and give away, as well as all austerities that you may perform, should be done as an offering unto Me." (Bg. 9.27)

The Loving Exchange

As stated before, we have to make friendship with Kṛṣṇa. It is not possible to claim any favor of the Supreme, but if we approach Him with love it is said that He can actually be conquered. There are six principles of love by which one can understand that another person loves him. The first is *dadāti*—when we love someone, we must give him something. The second is that we must take something from him. Next, we must give him something to eat and also accept what he gives to eat. One must also disclose his mind, and if the beloved is in difficulty, one must also hear him disclose his. We have to relate to God in this way. The beginning, therefore, is offering something. As stated before, this is not very difficult, for it is facilitated to such an extent in *Bhagavad-gītā* that any poor man from any part of the world can make an offering that Kṛṣṇa will accept.

patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyam
yo me bhaktyā prayacchati
tad ahaṁ bhakty-upahṛtam
aśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ

"If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit or water, I will accept it." (Bg. 9.26)

These four items can be offered universally. No one is so poor that he cannot offer a leaf, or a flower, or a piece of fruit, or a little water. Indeed, it is not

possible even to live without water; so there is no excuse for any living being not to make an offering due to having no offerable object. It is not the gift that is important, but the love with which it is offered. Love is the principal ingredient. Because the gifts are brought with love, Kṛṣṇa accepts them.

God is full, but He accepts our devotional love. Love means that we should offer Kṛṣṇa the most dear, the choicest, the best thing. It is not that we should keep sumptuous foods for ourselves and offer Kṛṣṇa only a leaf and a little water. That is known as cheating, and of course it is not possible to conceal this cheating from Kṛṣṇa. Since everything belongs to Kṛṣṇa, it is really not possible to offer Him anything; therefore the only thing we are actually offering is our love. All goods and resources in the universe are supplied by Kṛṣṇa; the same objects may be there, but if we utilize them to gratify our senses, we go to the darkest regions of the universe, and if we offer them to Kṛṣṇa with love, these very objects become spiritualized and become a means for liberation.

The Consciousness for Peace

Simply by changing our consciousness we can spiritualize the whole world. The world is anxious for peace, and this is the actual method—change of consciousness. If we encroach upon God's property and try to utilize it for our own purposes, then there is no possibility of peace. Everything in the world belongs to God—nay, everything in the creation—and it is necessary for us to acknowledge this. If we steal something from someone else, we cannot expect peace. Nor can we ever really expect to

enjoy that stolen property, because we will always be anxious about being caught. Similarly, by stealing from God we become subject to apprehension by His police force, which is known as material nature. As soon as we use the property of God to gratify our own senses, nature will inflict miseries upon us. This is the law of nature and is clearly stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*:

daivī hy eṣā guṇamayī
mama māyā duratyayā
mām eva ye prapadyante
māyām etāṁ taranti te

"This divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it." (Bg. 7.14)

It is not in our power to surpass the stringent laws of material nature. *Guṇamayī* refers to the three modes of goodness, passion and ignorance. Regardless of how strong we may think we are, the three qualities of material nature are stronger and will hold us under their sway. To extricate ourselves, we should not attempt to dominate nature by utilizing her resources for our own personal gratification but should offer whatever resources are there to the Supreme Lord and then partake of them. This is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The Lord is supplying us with everything, and all we need do is acknowledge it. If we offer things to God and God accepts them, He becomes our friend, and if God is our friend, we will not want anything. We will find ourselves totally fulfilled and will find that we have everything. There will be no anxiety, for once we know that Kṛṣṇa is our friend and protector, we will become peaceful automatically.



Kṛṣṇa Conscious Calendar

Here are some upcoming holidays and festivals for Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees. Devotees of the ISKCON center nearest you will gladly tell you more about the meaning of these festivals.

February 1	February 4	February 6	February 16	February 18	February 20
Disappearance day of Śrīla Jayadeva Gosvāmī.	Disappearance day of Śrīla Locana dāsa Ṭhākura.	Ekādaśī (Ṣaṭ-tilā-ekādaśī) (fasting from grains and beans).	Vāsānta-pañcamī of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Appearance day of Śrī Viṣṇupriyā-devī, Śrīla Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi, Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī and Śrī Raghunandana Ṭhākura. Disappearance day of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravatī Ṭhākura.	Appearance day of Śrī Advaita Ācārya. (fasting)	Disappearance day of Śrīpāda Madhvācārya.
February 21	February 22	February 23	February 24	February 26	February 27
Disappearance day of Śrīla Rāmānujācārya.	Ekādaśī (Bhaimī-ekādaśī) (fasting from grains and beans). Fasting for Vārāha-dvādaśī.	Vārāha-dvādaśī, the appearance day of Vārāha, Lord Kṛṣṇa's incarnation as a great boar.	Appearance day of Lord Nityānanda Prabhu.	Madhurotsava of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Appearance day of Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura.	Beginning of the Vaiṣṇava month of Govinda.

A senior member of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement
tells how Kṛṣṇa consciousness has gone from East to West and back again.

CONVERSATIONS FROM INDIA

Last March, when hundreds of devotees from all over the world gathered in India for a pilgrimage to the holy cities Māyāpur and Vṛndāvana, I had the opportunity, after four years, to again have the association of my senior Godbrother, His Holiness Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja. The ISKCON temple in Vṛndāvana was then under construction, and Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja had a small grass-and-adobe hut nearby, which he used as a headquarters for chanting, reading and executing his various Kṛṣṇa conscious duties.

After Śrīla Prabhupāda, our spiritual master, first brought some of his devotees to India in 1970, he entrusted to Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja the responsibility for overseeing the Society's various preaching

programs in India. I knew something about these programs from pictures, news clippings and letters I'd received from devotees, but still I felt that I didn't have a clear picture of what we were really doing there. However, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja is always eager to talk about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and so he kindly agreed to tell me about what our movement has done in India during the past four years.

So, there in his hut in Vṛndāvana, the transcendental land where Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself had appeared 5,000 years ago to display His transcendental pastimes, Mahārāja and I spent several mornings simply talking about Kṛṣṇa consciousness—and especially Kṛṣṇa consciousness in India. Here is an excerpt from our conversations, which we taped to share with readers of BACK TO GODHEAD. We will print more in a future issue.

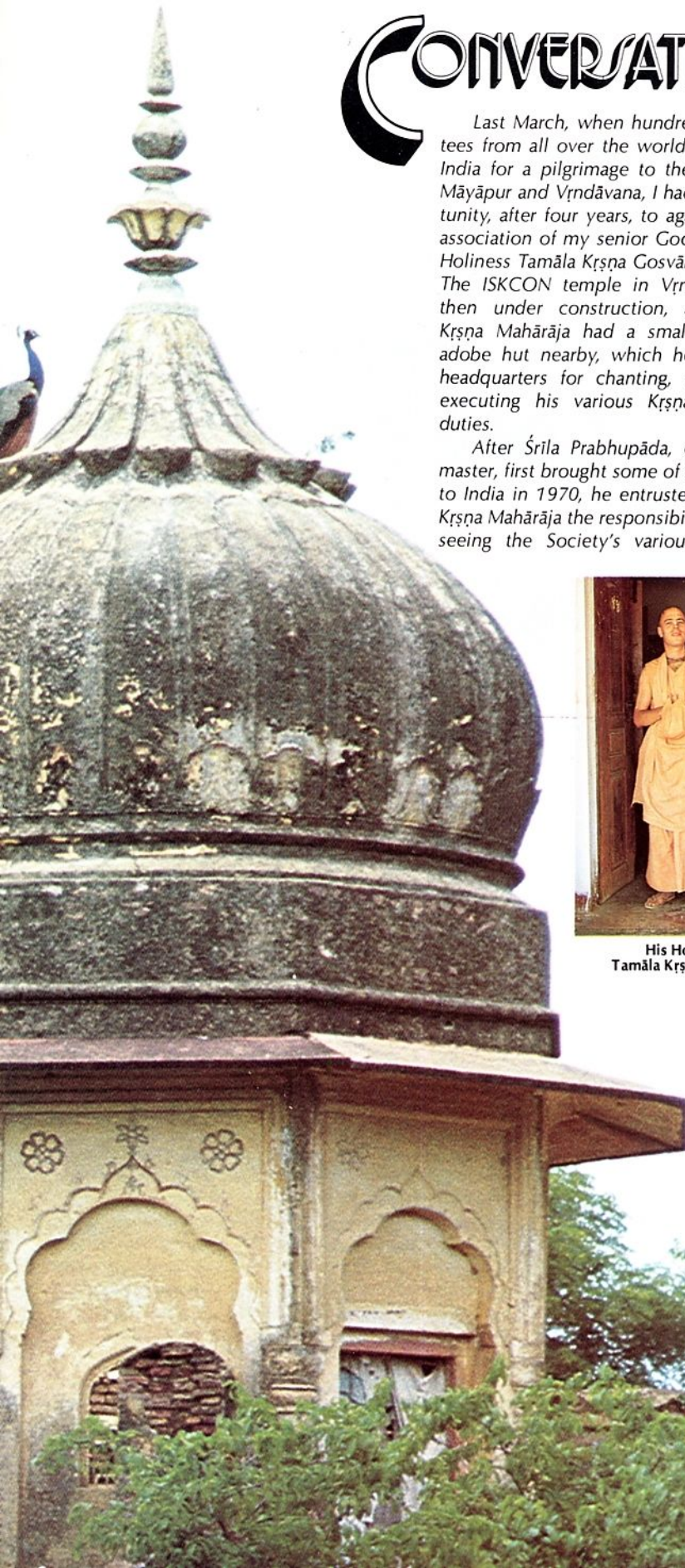
—Jayādvaita dāsa; Editor, BACK TO GODHEAD



His Holiness
Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Gosvāmī

TAMĀLA KṚṢṆA GOSVĀMĪ: Śrīla Prabhupāda has said that originally, after he took *san-nyāsa* [the renounced order of life], his program was that he wanted to preach to the Indian people; that was his intention. But although the original culture of India was a culture of God consciousness, the difficulty was that when Westerners took over India, they introduced their own materialistic values and impressed upon the Indians that the Indian spiritual culture was backwards, primitive, inferior. After years of Western domination, these ideas began to take hold, and the Indian people began to think that real progress was to be found in industrialization and Western materialism. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda found that people were reluctant to again seriously take up the principles of spiritual life.

So Śrīla Prabhupāda decided to go to America. He thought that if he could get some of the materialistic Westerners to appreciate the science of devotional service as found in the Vedic scriptures—and



A Spiritual Chain Reaction. Below: American and Indian devotees in Bombay join in chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and dancing in ecstasy.



Photo: R.S.S. Bardal



Photo: Yaduvāra dāsa

to actually become sincere devotees of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead—then the Indians would also realize the importance of the spiritual culture they had given up.

In India people are just starting to get enthusiastic about materialistic life, but in the West many people are frustrated with empty materialism. They are starting to realize that just to have bigger and bigger cities, more cars and more television sets will not necessarily make them happy. So Śrīla Prabhupāda thought that if he could get some of these Westerners to become spiritually pure, they could inspire the Indian people and in this way set off a spiritual chain reaction.

JAYĀDVAITA DĀSA: So Śrīla Prabhupāda sees great spiritual potential in India.

TAMĀLA KRṢṆA GOSVĀMĪ: Yes. Śrīla Prabhupāda always used to say, "My main business is in the West." But at the same time I could see that he was spending much of his time here in India. So I could understand that India must also be very important.

The Land of Pious Life

I remember Śrīla Prabhupāda saying that to take birth in India is a very rare opportunity. It means that one is very high in the spiritual evolutionary cycle. We understand from the Vedic literature that the living being is not actually his material body; he is the spiritual soul within the body. That spiritual soul is eternal, but because of material desires, he's taking birth in one body after another, in various species of life. The body is temporary, and after the death of the body, according to one's consciousness, he takes a new body. In this way, the living being takes body after body, in 8,400,000 species of life, until gradually he comes to the human form. Then, in that human form, one gets the opportunity to cultivate spiritual consciousness, or God consciousness, and the perfection of that God consciousness is to get free from this cycle of birth and death by becoming a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa, God, and going back home, back to Godhead. But even if one doesn't achieve that perfection, if one makes only partial advancement on the path, he still gets to come back again in another human body and continue from where he left off.

It would seem, therefore, if we study the past, that to take one's birth in India would be an advantage, because India is traditionally a country of spiritual culture. It is called *puṇya-bhūmi*, or the land of pious life. Many great incarnations of God have appeared in India. For example, this city of Vṛndāvana is special because Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared here. Therefore even today there are so many temples of Kṛṣṇa here, the people chant Kṛṣṇa's

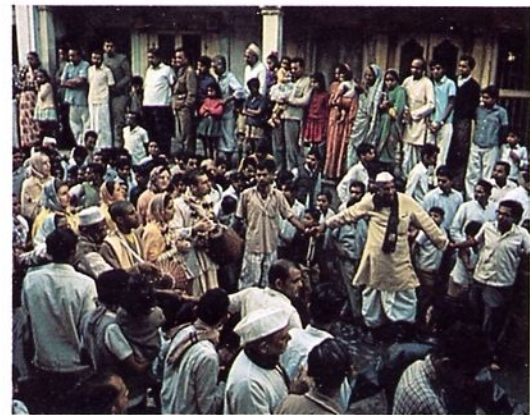


Photo: Yaduvāra dāsa

A Bold "Hare Krishna" (right) beckons people of Bombay to a Kṛṣṇa conscious festival. Above and left: In the city of Surat, people jammed the streets to greet the American and European devotees and offer them garlands of flowers.

holy name, and they're always hearing and chanting about the activities of Kṛṣṇa. So if you happen to be born in a place where you can see the places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, hear and chant His holy names or take food that's been offered to the Lord, that's very auspicious. And Lord Caitanya said, *bhārata-bhūmite haila manuṣya-janma yāra/ janma sārthaka kari' kara para-upakāra*: "One who has taken his birth as a human being in the land of India should make his life successful and work for the benefit of all other people."

JAYĀDVAITA DĀSA: So India is a good place to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

TAMĀLA KRṢṆA GOSVĀMĪ: Yes, it's a very good preaching field. It's good because the people are still to some extent Kṛṣṇa conscious here in India. Preaching here is not a question of teaching something completely new; it's a question of reviving something which is not very dormant. We say that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the dormant God consciousness within everyone. But here it's not quite as dormant. It's just barely sleeping. You go anywhere and start chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and right away people join in with the chanting. You don't have to teach them these nonsectarian holy names of the Lord, because they already know how to chant them—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Purity in the Midst of Confusion

But you *do* have to overcome the Māyāvāda influence, the impersonal influence. That is very strong. In the West, people are innocent. They are materialistic, but their spiritual tradition is



Photo: Yodavara datta

more or less simple and straightforward because they have faith in only one God, the Supreme Lord who created everything, and they generally understand that everyone else is a servant of God. Now originally the Vedic writings contain the same information found in other scriptures in other parts of the world, but they also reveal more.

Śrīla Prabhupāda gives the example that two plus two equals four both in elementary arithmetic and in advanced calculus, but with calculus one has a more detailed understanding. In the same way, other scriptures tell us that God is great, but through the Vedic scriptures we can understand how He manifests His greatness because they tell about His name, form, qualities and

pastimes. The Vedic scriptures also give information that God has an impersonal aspect, just as the sun has its sunshine, and they tell us that there are many demigods, who are also living beings like us, subordinate to God, but who control various functions of nature as a service to the Supreme Lord. So the Vedic literature is advanced and comprehensive, and therefore one must be pure to understand it.

The Vedic culture was originally one of purity, in which the central point was God consciousness. But it has gradually deteriorated because we've now entered an age of quarrel and hypocrisy, called Kali-yuga. In this age, which began 5,000 years ago and will last roughly 400,000 more, people are short-lived,



The Most Substantial Spiritual Movement in India. Top: A view of Hare Kṛṣṇa Land, site of ISKCON's Bombay center. Bottom: Under a huge tent in the center of Bombay, 20,000 people gathered daily to get a taste of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupāda
(right), flanked by
Indian admirers.
Below: Showing respect
in an ancient way,
ISKCON life members
offer lamps at Śrīla
Prabhupāda's feet.



Photo: Mṛmāyī-devī dāśī

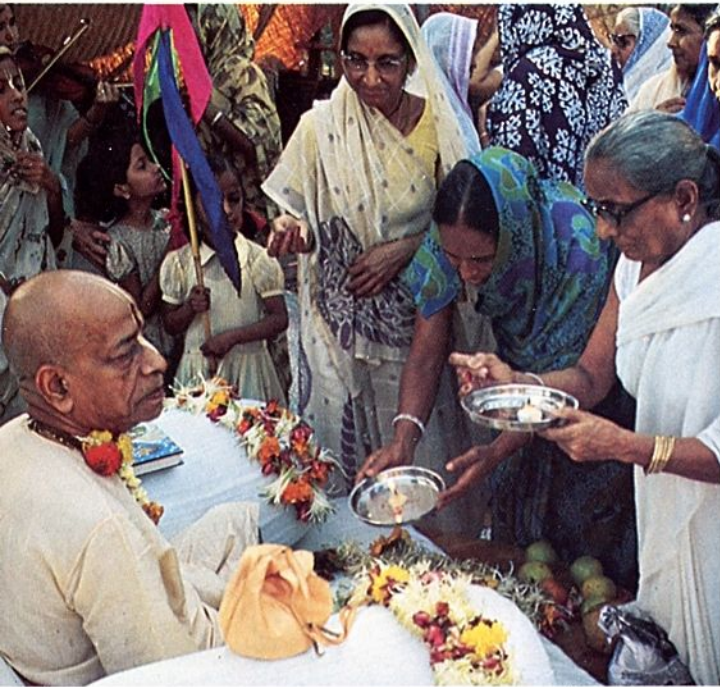


Photo: Viśākhā-devī dāśī

their memories are short, their good qualities are diminished, and their minds are generally agitated. Therefore, people in this age are generally more inclined toward sense gratification than spiritual life, and so the high standards of the Vedic culture, even in India, are gradually being forgotten.

Now, with the combined influence of Kali-yuga and Western materialism, what's happened in India is that various so-called *gurus*, or spiritual teachers, have twisted the scriptures and confused people by teaching that there's no difference between God, the demigods and the impersonal feature of God. Taking advantage of the innocent people, they've taught that God is impersonal and that we are all one with God. They don't distinguish between God in His personal form, God in His impersonal feature, the demigods and the ordinary living beings. Their main point is that everything is one and everybody is one. "Everything is one. But I am the biggest one, I am the leader of the ones, because I have realized it." That is their point. And bewildered people subscribe to these ideas.

These teachings, however, distort the real principle of Vedic spiritual culture. According to the Vedic scriptures, we are all one with God in our qualities, but God is great whereas we are very tiny. The example is given of a golden ornament and a mine of gold. The gold in the ornament and the gold in the mine have the same qualities, but the quantity of gold in the ornament can-

not compare to the quantity in the mine. Another example is that of the drop of ocean water and the vast ocean itself. The drop is qualitatively one and quantitatively different from the ocean. Similarly, we are one with God in our qualities, but we are different from Him in quantity because He is very great and we are very small. The impersonal aspect is also one with God because it is a part of God, but it is not the complete realization; it is only one partial feature of God, and *Bhagavad-gītā* says that it is subordinate to God's personal form. The demigods are also servants of God. They may be more powerful than us, but they are all tiny in relationship with God. The Vedic scriptures say, *nityo nityānāṁ cetanaś cetanānām*: "There is one supreme eternal living being among all the many eternal living beings." There is one Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is known as Kṛṣṇa, and everyone else is His servant. That is the original Vedic principle.

A Sensation Within the Heart

Now, the distorted teachings of the impersonalists and demigod worshipers, mixed with the upsurge of materialism, have caused confusion in the spiritual culture of India, but actually that confusion is only superficial because in their hearts most Indian people still think of themselves as servants of God. They may sit and hear some lecture by a big impersonalist scholar, but ultimately you'll find that when they go home they have a little altar, and before they eat they offer their food to Kṛṣṇa. They sing to Kṛṣṇa, and they celebrate Janmāṣṭamī [Kṛṣṇa's appearance day]. They love Kṛṣṇa. And this spirit of devotion to the Supreme Lord is actually lying dormant in every Indian's heart. That is the point.

JAYĀDVAITA DĀSA: It's just been covered over.

TAMĀLA KṚṢṆA GOSVĀMĪ: Yes, in the cities it may be a bit more covered, and in the big cities the people are often very materialistic, but in their hearts at least seventy-five or eighty percent of the people are Kṛṣṇa conscious. It's just slightly covered over. Only within the last couple of hundred years has it been covered over.

Vaiṣṇavism, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, is very strong in the hearts of many, many people, and seeing Westerners taking to Vaiṣṇavism has a particular effect. It's like a shock. It produces a tremendous sensation within the hearts of these people. They almost want to cry. It's something so much pleasing to them that all they want to do is say, "Please come into my home. Please stay with us." It's like that. They cannot express how happy they are. It's a very wonderful feeling. That's a very developed Kṛṣṇa conscious spirit. And Prabhupāda sees that.

In a battlefield, if someone is very seriously injured and someone is not so seriously injured, you first heal the one who is not so seriously injured, because you have a better chance of saving him. These people in India, at least many of them, are in that position. They can be brought up to the platform of Kṛṣṇa consciousness very, very easily.

Of course, when people in India see Western Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees, they often feel pride, thinking that we are also becoming Hindus. Now, we're glad that they're pleased by the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, but actually we have to explain to them that we are not in fact becoming Hindus. Rather, we are becoming Vaiṣṇavas, or devotees of the Supreme Lord. This is natural. The soul is neither Christian, nor Hindu, nor Jewish. The natural, eternal position of every single soul is to be a servant of Kṛṣṇa, or God. Therefore, we tell our Indian friends that we are not trying to spread the culture of one particular nation, sect or faith. Rather, we want to come to a higher understanding, an

understanding that Kṛṣṇa is actually the same Supreme Lord who is within everyone and who is worshiped by different names throughout the world, and that devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is the natural spiritual consciousness that is dormant within every living being.

An Ecstatic Beginning

So that is the background of the position of India. Prabhupāda's program for coming to India revolved around a plan to immediately restore the spiritual balance in Indian culture. In America he had to present his program slowly at first because when he first came, Kṛṣṇa consciousness was a science that no one knew anything about. So he started very humbly—"I opened a temple on Second Avenue, and I chanted in a park"—and gradually he became successful. When he came back to India, however, the news of his wonderful preaching in America had preceded him.

The first thing Śrīla Prabhupāda did was to come to Bombay, to a meeting called the Sādhu Samāḥ, where all the big *sādhus* [saintly persons] in India come together once a year. At this meeting almost every *sannyāsī* was a Māyāvādī *sannyāsī*. And then Prabhupāda came on with forty disciples from ten different countries, including Sarasvatī [the three-year-old daughter of an American devotee couple], and just completely overwhelmed everyone. We all sat down in the third or fourth row, behind all the big *sādhus*. This was up on a very elevated stage, and there were about ten thousand people sitting on chairs on the ground. The *sannyāsīs* were all giving lengthy addresses, but I could see that all the people were straining to catch a glimpse of Sarasvatī, of the foreign disciples, and especially of Śrīla Prabhupāda. They had practically no interest in these big *sādhus*.

Finally, after about two and a half hours of lengthy, tedious lectures, they gave us the nod, and the first thing we did was start a rip-roaring *kīrtana*. We danced all around those big *sādhus*, encouraging them to join in dancing and singing the holy names of the Lord. But they were too embarrassed to do so—in fact, most of them walked right off the stage. And we just took over the whole stage, then we jumped to the ground, and everyone rose up. We didn't ask them—they just rose up and started chanting and dancing. All the guards were trying to control them, but they pushed the guards away, and the people came in and were dancing with us in ecstasy.

We had *kīrtana* for about half an hour. Finally we stopped and asked everyone to sit down. (Everyone rushed up to the stage. They didn't even want to sit down.) Then Prabhupāda just said, "I do not want to say anything. I think that this chanting has said everything I could possibly say. I am not making any claims to have performed any miracles. I do not claim to be God. I am simply the servant of the servant of the servant of God. I am spreading Lord Caitanya's message, and this is the result." He gave a very humble talk—about two minutes—but it was just more than anyone could have said. And immediately it was all over the front pages. Then he told us to go on the streets for *kīrtana*—immediately, again, all over the front pages. Our pictures were featured in all the leading magazines. It was sensational. We were the first substantial group of Eastern-influenced Westerners to come to India; no one had ever done this before.

And that was just the beginning. It was followed by the *pāṇḍala*, the first *pāṇḍala* program in Bombay, which was just unbelievable. [This was a two-week-long Kṛṣṇa conscious festival in a huge *pāṇḍala*, or exhibition tent, in Cross Maiden, the central crossroads of Bombay.] It put us in the forefront of public attention.

The Leaders of India

JAYĀDVAITA DĀSA: How did the temples here in Vṛndāvana and Māyāpur first get started?

TAMĀLA KṚṢṆA GOSVĀMĪ: At that time, I remember—it was about three or four months after we came to India—Prabhupāda was searching for land in Māyāpur. "I came to get land in Māyāpur." [Śrīdhāma Māyāpur is the birthplace of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the original father of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.] We had tried to go to Māyāpur to look for land when we first came to Calcutta, but we couldn't; the flood waters stopped us from crossing the Ganges to go. So Prabhupāda was thinking, "Maybe Lord Caitanya doesn't want me to establish a temple in Māyāpur." So he sent me to Vṛndāvana, but we didn't get any land in Vṛndāvana either. He kept saying to us, "You have to establish yourselves and do something tangible. It will not do if you are simply known as dancing white elephants. 'They came, sang, danced—and left.' You must do something substantial so that they will say, 'The Westerners have come, and this is what they have done.' " So Prabhupāda was trying for some land, and somehow we finally got this land in Māyāpur and began construction. Then again someone gave us land here in Vṛndāvana, so we began constructing a temple here also. Then we got land in Bombay. The land in Māyāpur is in the best location. You've seen it now. It's centrally located on the main road, between all the temples. The land in Vṛndāvana is on the main road, bordering on three different roads, and it's in the most serene and respected area of spiritual importance, where all the *āśramas* are located. It's the best location. The land in Bombay is now said to be worth four times what we paid for it. It's said that this area will become like the Miami Beach of India, visited by millions of people, and we have five acres. In Hyderabad we were donated land directly in the center of the city, like Times Square and 42nd Street. And at least 1,000 to 2,000 people come to the daily noontime service, without any advertising.

So we have very nicely situated land, and the leading men of India have enrolled as members of our Society. Prabhupāda has always stressed, "Get to the leaders of India." And we have. We count among our life members the leading industrialists, politicians and professionals of India, about three thousand of them. We're establishing different places with guest houses for them to stay in, as well as guest houses for tourists from abroad.

A Practical Program for Basic Needs

JAYĀDVAITA DĀSA: The building in Māyāpur is wonderful. Westerners like us can come here, live without inconvenience and advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. What is Prabhupāda stressing for India now?

TAMĀLA KṚṢṆA GOSVĀMĪ: Now our program is slowly starting to shift. Our movement is definitely number one in India. Everyone acknowledges that there is no other movement so substantial, at this particular time, as our movement.

JAYĀDVAITA DĀSA: Spiritually.

TAMĀLA KṚṢṆA GOSVĀMĪ: Spiritually! Everyone has now acknowledged that this is the number-one movement and that Prabhupāda is the number-one *guru* in the world. The Indian people acknowledge that fact, clearly. So now that he's established our movement's prestige as first class and has gotten this land, which establishes our structure, he's especially working for the benefit of the masses. And the way is by food distribution. That is the method of approach. Feed a man, give him *kṛṣṇa-prasāda* [sanctified food] and let him engage in the *kīrtana* [chanting] and *ārati* [temple worship]. That can gradually help

"In this world, there is nothing so sublime and pure as transcendental knowledge. Such knowledge is the mature fruit of all mysticism. And one who has achieved this enjoys the self within himself in due course of time."—Bhagavad-gītā As It Is



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thousands and thousands of people, not only by relieving their hunger but by reviving their Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Because if anyone comes to our *prasāda* distribution program, that means he's hungry. If he is hungry, that means he can't listen to philosophy. If his hunger is not satisfied, he'll never become Kṛṣṇa conscious. This is the point. If we just went around with a program of speaking and *kīrtana*, they'd come once or twice, but they wouldn't see its practical value. But if you give them *prasāda* daily, with *kīrtana* and speaking, eventually you can convince them, "Look, this is the most practical way of life. Why don't you just live with us completely and work with us?" This is the program.

Practically speaking, many people in India are hungry. Not only can't they afford to purchase the necessary food to feed their families, but staple foods are no longer available in the larger cities of India. For example, the major cities Bombay and Calcutta, as well as many other cities of India, are now passing through a crisis period, in which there is no wheat available whatsoever. The basic food, called chapati, which goes along with every meal, just as in the West there is bread, is made from this wheat, but no wheat is available. And when it is available it is mixed with sawdust. Then, too, the rice being sold is of a terribly inferior quality. No one even wants to use it. Rice is another basic staple of the Indian diet. So with such important necessities as rice and wheat not available, people are literally starving here in India. Therefore we are organizing on an international basis to bring foodstuffs here to India that are very plentiful in other countries of the world. We are arranging for wheat, milk powder and other surplus foodstuffs from America, Canada and Australia.

Prosperity Through God Consciousness

Actually, God has arranged the world in such a way that what is short in one place is plentiful in another. Even within our own countries we may find in one place a surplus of gold and in another place a surplus of wheat, but in the place where there's gold there may be no wheat at all. Therefore the national economy is run so that there's a balance, by bringing products from places where they're plentiful to other places, where they're short. This now should be done worldwide. Actually, these national boundaries are man-made. God had no such boundaries in mind when He made this planet. Rather, He wants people throughout the world to cooperate. So if we want to cooperate with God's plan, we must overcome these nationalistic boundaries and bring whatever is lacking in one country from the countries where it is in plentiful supply.

With this in mind, we are now arranging for these foods to be brought to India. Of course, we do not hope to immediately feed all the hungry people of India. But in the major cities, such as Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi, we can immediately begin to feed thousands daily. And this program can gradually expand to include more and more people as it proves successful. We have no doubt that when people begin to eat the purified food we'll be serving—which is not merely food but what we call the mercy of God, or *prasāda*, since it's being given as an offering from God—people will begin to appreciate that God is maintaining them. In effect, we hope that when people's hunger is alleviated, they will be able to listen closely and have enough faith in the fact that God is their only maintainer and protector. The entire Vedic civilization was based on this God-centered philosophy. So that has to be restored to India. If it is, then the people of India will automatically once again take to a very natural, happy and prosperous way of life.



THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

IN THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER OF *BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ*, Arjuna, the perfect student, requested Kṛṣṇa, the perfect teacher, to present a detailed analysis of the phenomenal world. Such a study of material nature, for the purpose of distinguishing matter from spirit, is known as Sāṅkhya philosophy. The Lord replied to Arjuna's request by briefly explaining the twenty-four material elements (illustrated on the following pages) that comprise the material world. These elements are Kṛṣṇa's external, or inferior, energy, but they exist eternally in some form or another. We find ourselves now in

a temporary combination of these material elements called the material world, which, by the arrangement of the Lord, is complete in itself because these elements provide the complete resources for its existence and maintenance. Therefore by studying these elements, one can understand himself, his body, the world in which he lives and the relationship between the three. Gradually one can learn to distinguish oneself, as superior, spiritual energy, from the inferior, material energy. And one can scientifically realize that the original source of both these energies is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. When our consciousness returns to its original purity, we can understand all these very clearly.

Our vision now, however, is clouded by false ego, which is the basic principle of material existence. False ego means the acceptance of the body to be oneself. Thus our bodily designations, such as American, Russian, black, white, Christian, Hindu, man, woman, fat, thin, stupid and intelligent, are manifestations of false ego. Our real ego is spiritual, for we are tiny spiritual parts of the supreme living entity, Kṛṣṇa. Since we are actually spiritual souls, our only connection with our material bodies and minds is that we dwell within them for fifty or a hundred years. *Bhagavad-gītā* therefore compares the gross or visible body to a coat, and it compares the subtle body—consisting of mind and intelligence—to a shirt. The person within, however, is different from the bodily shirt and coat. His misidentification with this body is called false ego. And in the illusion created by false ego, one thinks that by material arrangements and plans he will become happy.

We can understand to some extent that the body we have is a symptom of our desires and activities. That is why we can tell so much about a person simply by looking at him. As it is said, the face is the index of the mind. We have forgotten, however, that before we had this body we had another body, and we do not know that when this present body is finished we will be forced to accept another. In other words, our



by Viśākhā-devī dāśī

present body and activities reflect our previous body and activities and give the background for the next. The man who likes to eat without discrimination may attain the body of a hog, for hogs eat anything and everything. One who has fixed his consciousness on godly qualities will change to the form of a demigod. And one who is Kṛṣṇa conscious will be transferred to Kṛṣṇa's abode in the spiritual world to associate with the Supreme Lord. Thus, at the time of death the consciousness we have created will carry us to our next body.

We may ask, who knows my consciousness at the time of death? Who is to say what future body I deserve? Kṛṣṇa knows. An expansion of the Supreme Personality of Godhead lives in the heart with the spiritual soul, just as one friend sits with another. One friend, the soul, is trying to enjoy life by gratifying his senses. The other friend, however, the Supersoul, is simply watching, for He is the transcendental witness, overseer, permitter and supreme enjoyer. He is the constant companion and the most dear friend of every conditioned soul because it is He only who fulfills our desires, both in this life and in the next. As we may smell the aroma of a rose by being near it, so Kṛṣṇa, as the Supersoul in the heart, knows exactly what we want, and in due course (even though it may not be the best for us and even though He may not want to give it to us), He rewards us with a body just suited to our desires.

This science of the transmigration of the soul is yet unknown to material scientists, although Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, has presented it authoritatively and practically in *Bhagavad-gītā* and although great teachers and saintly persons have accepted it throughout the ages. Kṛṣṇa says, "The living entity in the material world carries his different conceptions of life from one body to another as the air carries aromas." (Bg. 15.8) Air, being subtle, cannot be contaminated, but it may carry fair or foul odors. Similarly, the spiritual soul is completely pure; it is eternal, full of bliss and knowledge, and it cannot be materially contaminated. It does, however, carry our material desires, which force us to accept one body after another in this material world to fulfill those desires.

Lord Kṛṣṇa continues, "The living entity, thus taking another gross body, obtains a certain type of ear, tongue, nose and sense of touch, which are grouped about the mind. He thus enjoys a particular set of sense objects." (Bg. 15.9) The five knowledge-acquiring senses (the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and touch) and the five working senses (the voice, legs, hands, evacuating organs and reproductive organs) seek and

interact with the five objects of the senses (form, sound, smell, taste and touch), under the direction of the mind. This interaction produces desire, hatred, pleasure or pain, depending on how each set of senses responds to its objects. Thus we can understand why one man's food is another's poison; why we are repelled by stool, for example, which for the hog is a sought-after meal. The example of Arjuna shows how bodily relationships (which are also material interactions) cause material perplexity. Because of bodily and mental relationships, Arjuna was averse to fighting his kinsmen in the Battle of Kurukṣetra. Kṛṣṇa therefore spoke *Bhagavad-gītā* to teach Arjuna (and ourselves as well) the highest criterion of happiness, transcendental to the relative and flickering actions and reactions of the twenty-four material elements.

The Lord said, "The living entities in this conditioned world are My eternal, fragmental parts. Due to conditioned life, they are struggling very hard with the six senses, which include the mind." (Bg. 15.7) Although the soul is always pure, it comes under the control of nature when trapped within a material body because the body, being composed of the twenty-four material elements, acts according to the laws of nature, which govern those elements. The embodied living entity has no power to change those laws. Suppose he is put into the body of a dog. He must then act like a dog; he must bark with his vocal cords, he must eat food suitable for a dog, he must raise his leg in a certain way, and so on. In the same way, human beings, under the dictation of the mind, are also forced by the laws of nature to accept or reject different sense objects. The difference between animals and humans is that we have higher intelligence, enabling us to understand who we are—that we are actually not material but spiritual entities and that as spiritual souls we can be liberated from our embarrassing position in this material world when we wholeheartedly accept and follow the process given to us by bona fide spiritual authorities. That is the sum and substance of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy. Kṛṣṇa Himself says, "This divine energy of Mine [the material energy] is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it." (Bg. 7.14)

Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord, can be compared to a king, for as a king, being the lawmaker, is beyond all the laws in his kingdom and even has the power to pardon prisoners, so Kṛṣṇa, the cause of all causes, is beyond the control of nature, and His devotee, who by His grace has understood His glories, is freed from material control. Such a devotee feels full in himself and is callous to material happiness or distress. He is liberated from the urges of the mind and senses. A person in such transcendental consciousness still has desires, he still accepts and rejects, but he accepts anything favorable and rejects anything unfavorable for the execution of devotional service. He has no interest separate from that of the Lord.

To become free from the influence of material energy, we



Illustration: Bharadrāja dāsa

have to change our consciousness. How? Kṛṣṇa says:

*man-manā bhava mad-bhakto
mad-yājī mām namaskuru
mām evaiśyasi yuktvaivam
ātmānaṁ mat-parāyaṇaḥ*

"Engage your mind always in thinking of Me and become My devotee. Offer obeisances and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me." (Bg. 9.34) Thus we can liberate ourselves from repeated births and deaths by learning how to control our minds so that we become absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The mind is always engaged in some kind of thought, but one's thoughts will be restricted to the actions and reactions of the

twenty-four material elements unless and until one engages in spiritual hearing and spiritual chanting, following the example of a bona fide teacher. Factually the whole material creation consists only of different names for the material elements and has no more significance than the babble of sea waves. The only links we have with the real, spiritual world are God's representatives who throughout the ages have passed down His confidential, transcendental knowledge, without whimsically changing it. When our thoughts connect with this spiritual line, they will transcend material qualities, and we will then be able to overcome the laws of nature. Otherwise not.

In trying to satisfy their illusory desires, which spring from the interactions of the elements, materialists remain bound by the stringent laws of material nature as if by iron chains. They do not know that the material sciences in which they take shelter deal only with the gross elements and the objects of the senses, and nothing more.

Philosophers and psychologists who study mental activities also have only fragmental knowledge because they do not know the ultimate source, Kṛṣṇa. "The foolish cannot understand how a living entity can quit his body, nor can they understand what sort of body he enjoys under the spell of the modes of nature," the Lord says in the *Gītā*. "But one whose eyes are trained in knowledge can see all this." (Bg. 15.10) Śrīla Prabhupāda comments on this verse: "Every living entity is quitting his body under certain circumstances and enjoying under certain circumstances under the spell of material nature. As a result, he is suffering different kinds of happiness and distress, under the illusion of sense enjoyment. Persons who are everlastingly fooled by lust and desire lose all power of understanding their change of body and their stay in a particular body. They cannot comprehend it. Those who have developed spiritual knowledge, however, can see that the spirit is different from the body and is changing its body and enjoying in different ways. A person in knowledge can understand how the conditioned living entity

is suffering in this material existence. Therefore those who are highly developed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness try their best to give this knowledge to the people in general, for their conditional life is very much troublesome. They should come out of it and be Kṛṣṇa conscious and liberate themselves to transfer to the spiritual world.”

As illustrated on the following pages, there are twenty-four material elements, which are the constituents of the entire material creation. The word “element” in this context refers to the fundamental features of both the world and the bodies of living beings. First there are the five great elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether—which in different combinations compose our gross (visible) bodies and the visible universe as well. Beyond these are the subtle elements—mind, intelligence and false ego—which gather information (or misinformation) from the five knowledge-acquiring senses, namely the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and sense of touch. Then, according

to the dictations of the mind and intelligence, we act. Why do we act? We act for pleasure, either immediate (like the pleasure of eating something tasty) or future (like the pleasure of the success we achieve after hard work or study). We perform the activity with our working senses—the voice, legs, hands, evacuating organs and reproductive organs. And this activity is always related to the objects of our senses—form, sound, smell, taste and touch. Everything we perceive in the world we live in falls into one of these five categories of sense objects. The mind, the center of the senses, is always thinking, feeling and willing and always accepting or rejecting the different objects of the senses. This interaction produces either desire, hatred, pleasure or pain.

All these elements and their interactions have one thing in common: they are always subject to change, for they are material and therefore impermanent. However, the knower of these elements and their interactions, the spiritual soul, is different. When he revives his eternal relationship with the Supersoul, the Lord, he becomes free from the control of the laws of material nature, and his life becomes perfect.



THE 24

GROSS ELEMENTS



1. Earth



2. Water

KNOWLEDGE-ACQUIRING SENSES



6. Eyes



7. Ears



8. Nose



9. Tongue

16 Mind

The center of the senses.
Controls acceptance and
rejection of sense objects.

17 Intelligence

Provides the power of
discrimination.

OBJECTS OF THE SENSES



20. Form



21. Sound

RESULTS OF THE INTERACTION



PLEASURE



PAIN



SUPERSOUL

SPIRIT SOUL

MATERIAL ELEMENTS



3. Fire

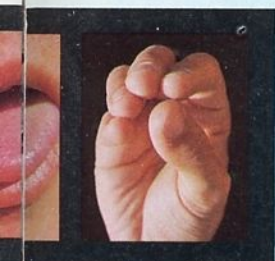


4. Air



5. Ether

WORKING SENSES



10. Touch



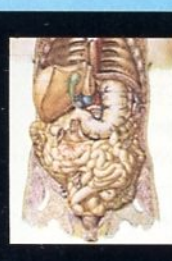
11. Voice



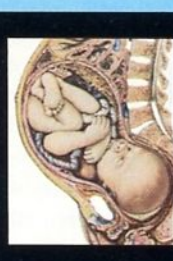
12. Legs



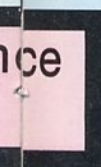
13. Hands



14. Evacuating
Organs



15. Reproductive
Organs



18 False Ego

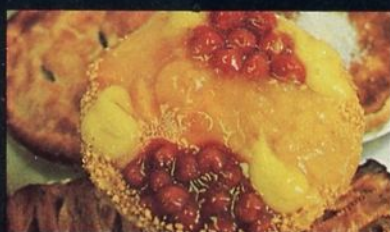
The spiritual soul's
mistaken identification
with the material body.

19 Pradhāna

Unmanifested stage
of the modes
of material nature.



22. Smell



23. Taste

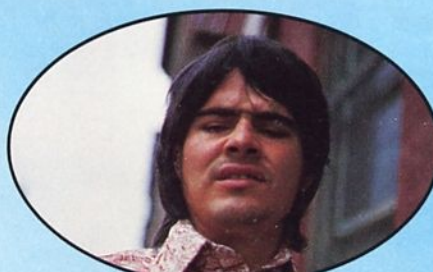


24. Touch

CTIONS OF THE 24 MATERIAL ELEMENTS



DESIRE



HATRED

Initiation Into Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

by His Holiness Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmi

IF A CASUAL ONLOOKER attends an initiation ceremony at a Hare Kṛṣṇa temple, he will find the action colorful and absorbing, but most likely he will be bewildered as to what it all means. For a typical initiation, about one hundred devotees gather in the temple. The men and women to be initiated—perhaps a dozen of them—sit in two rows, facing the devotee designated to be the priest of the ceremony. The priest sits on a pillow before a smooth dirt mound about three feet square, which is decorated with incense and flowers. Later, during the ceremony, a fire will be built on this mound. Beside the mound is a stack of firewood, five bowls of brightly dyed rice flour, and bowls of sesame and barley seeds, clarified butter, fruits and spices. Objects considered auspicious in the Vedic culture, such as large banana leaves, coconuts, flower garlands, and clay pots filled with water, decorate the temple. Throughout the ceremony, except during a lecture by the priest, all the devotees individually chant the *mahā-mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. The sound of many voices chanting produces the powerful effect of a droning, humming prayer.

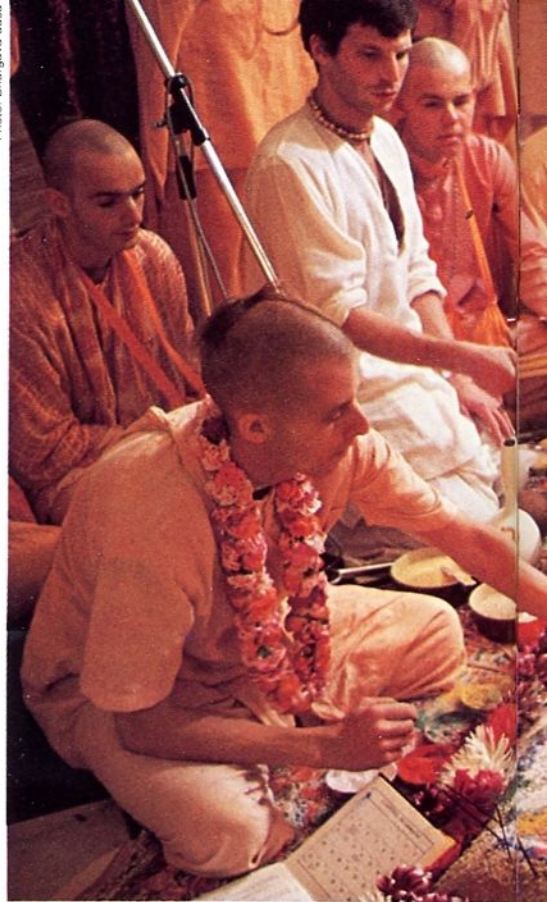
Often these ceremonies are held in the presence of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder and spiritual master of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. In that case, the most important moment for the initiate comes when Śrīla Prabhupāda calls him forward to be accepted as a disciple. The devotee bows before his spiritual master and then stands before him face to face. "Do you know the four rules?" Śrīla Prabhupāda asks. "Yes," he answers. "How many rounds do you chant

daily?" The disciple answers, "At least sixteen rounds." Śrīla Prabhupāda nods: "All right. Try to avoid the ten offenses. Your name is Govinda dāsa." The other devotees then congratulate their new Godbrother.

But what does all this mean? What are these four rules and ten offenses? And why rules? What are these initiates agreeing to? How did apparently ordinary people change to become disciples at a Hare Kṛṣṇa initiation? To understand what is going on at the initiation ceremony and what has led these people to become disciples—and to understand how one goes about becoming a disciple—let us look back from the time of the ceremony to the time when the initiates first heard about Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The first invitation may come in many different ways. "Someone gave me a book about Kṛṣṇa," recalls one devotee. "The Hare Kṛṣṇa people came to speak at our school," says another. "They held a festival in my town." "I met one on the street, and we talked." Because of the active preaching of the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees, thousands of people daily hear something about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But when some people hear they become eager to hear more, whereas others do not.

His Holiness Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmi is one of the leaders of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Until he returned to the United States in July to organize distribution of Kṛṣṇa conscious books to schools and libraries, he was serving as the personal secretary of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.



Fruits, grains
spices and
brightly
colored dyes
are all
ingredients
in the
initiation
ceremony.

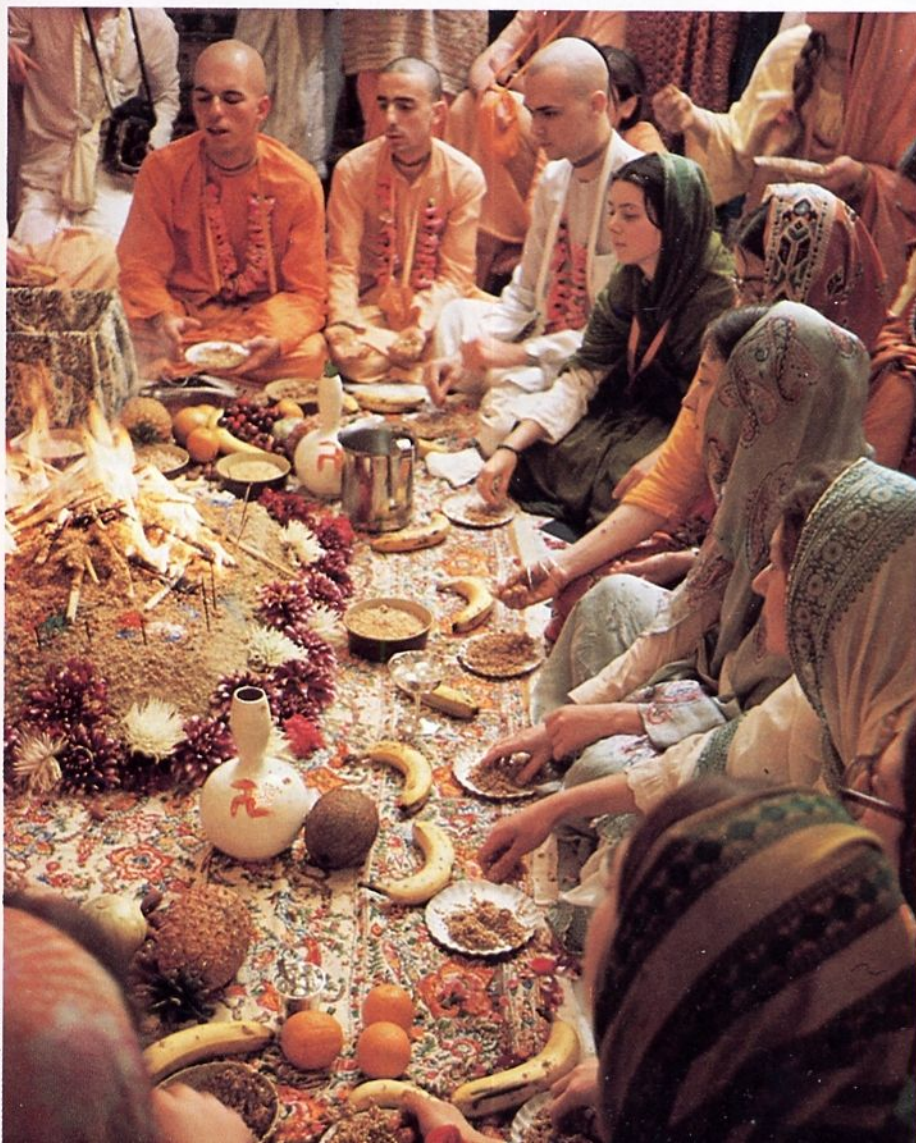


The hearing that sparks initial attraction to Kṛṣṇa is called, in Sanskrit, *śrad-dhā*, which means "faithful hearing." Of course, when we speak of "faith" we risk the immediate distaste of atheists and agnostics, and if we say "faith in God," they sour. But such faith is exactly what is required. Sometimes they argue, "Kṛṣṇa consciousness requires faith even in the beginning? We'll never accept something simply on faith." The materialistic investigator says, "We must experiment, prove, give evidence, and even then we never say that something is true.



We constantly experiment and revise.” Nevertheless, although materialistic scientists and scholars constantly revise their latest versions of the truth, they cannot rightly assert that they have done away with faith. We find, rather, that everyone places his faith in something or someone. One may not have the faith to join a society for God consciousness, but then he has faith instead that if he joins the Bank of America, for example, his money will be safe. Or he has faith, as most people do, in news reports and airline schedules, or in the quality of the food he buys, although he cannot always inspect it. A man even has enough faith in his barber to allow him to shave his throat with a sharp razor. Kṛṣṇa consciousness, however, means to have unflinching trust, not in barbers and news media, but in something sublime.

Yet Kṛṣṇa conscious faith is never blind, for it is based on knowledge. Lord Kṛṣṇa discusses different aspects of faith in Chapter Seventeen of *Bhagavad-gītā*. “The living being is said to be of a particular faith,” the Lord explains, “according to the modes he has acquired.” Śrīla Prabhupāda comments upon this verse, “Everyone has a particular type of faith, but his faith is considered good, passionate or ignorant according to the nature he has acquired. The real fact is that every living being is originally the fragmental part of the Supreme Lord. But when one forgets his relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead and comes into contact with the material nature, the resultant artificial faith is only material.” A Kṛṣṇa conscious person, however, has faith in great authorities, such as Lord Kṛṣṇa and the disciplic succession of spiritual masters, whose words are always in accord with the Vedic literature, originally spoken by God. A communist places his trust in Marx or Lenin, but a devotee trusts Lord Kṛṣṇa, the speaker of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Both have faith, but beyond that one must examine whether the leader or authority he trusts is perfect. In the beginning, one may not ac-



Above and left: His Holiness Satsvarūpa dāsa Gosvāmī conducts an initiation ceremony at the Kṛṣṇa consciousness temple in Paris, France.



cept or understand that Kṛṣṇa is the all-perfect Personality of Godhead, the source of everything spiritual and material, but a faithful person thinks, "These people are speaking something about God consciousness. Let me hear what they have to say." This is *śraddhā*, faithful hearing, the first step in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One who has *śraddhā* will go further; one who does not will turn away.

According to *Bhagavad-gītā*, the inclination to hear topics about Kṛṣṇa develops progressively from life to life. Thus one who in his past life took to spirituality but could not follow it to perfection takes to it again in the next life automatically, from where he left off. In any case, authorities in Kṛṣṇa consciousness tell us that hearing about Kṛṣṇa in the association of devotees of the Supreme Lord is the perfect religious process for enhancing one's spiritual development. The prospective devotee,

therefore, likes to hear about Kṛṣṇa consciousness and to hear the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa.

The next step is a natural one: the person who is hearing wants to hear more. Only to spend his spare time reading books like *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is no longer enough. He wants more association, and not just with the books but with people who understand the books and follow their instructions. The *Vedas* explicitly say, "Unless one associates with devotees, one cannot develop love of God; one cannot achieve it on one's own." In the *Gītā* Lord Kṛṣṇa describes the lives of such devotees: "The thoughts of My pure devotees dwell in Me, their lives are surrendered to Me, and they derive great satisfaction and bliss enlightening one another and conversing about Me."

The beginning candidate starts to find his materialistic association unsatisfying. Usually he tries to introduce Kṛṣṇa con-

scious ideas to his own family or friends. Sometimes he is successful and his friends also want to hear about Kṛṣṇa, but often they think he has gone crazy. In any case, he decides to seek practical advice from advanced devotees on how to proceed further in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He visits the temple more frequently, reveals his mind to the devotees, and spends more time chanting and reading.

By now, having progressed by hearing, he desires friendship with the Lord's devotees and even thinks ahead to his relationship with the spiritual master. The Vedic literature repeatedly stresses that saintly association is the most important necessity in spiritual life. *The Nectar of Devotion*, *the Complete Science of Bhakti-Yoga*, enumerates the most important principles of devotional service. The first three are as follows: (1) accepting the shelter of the lotus feet of a bona fide spiritual master, (2) be-

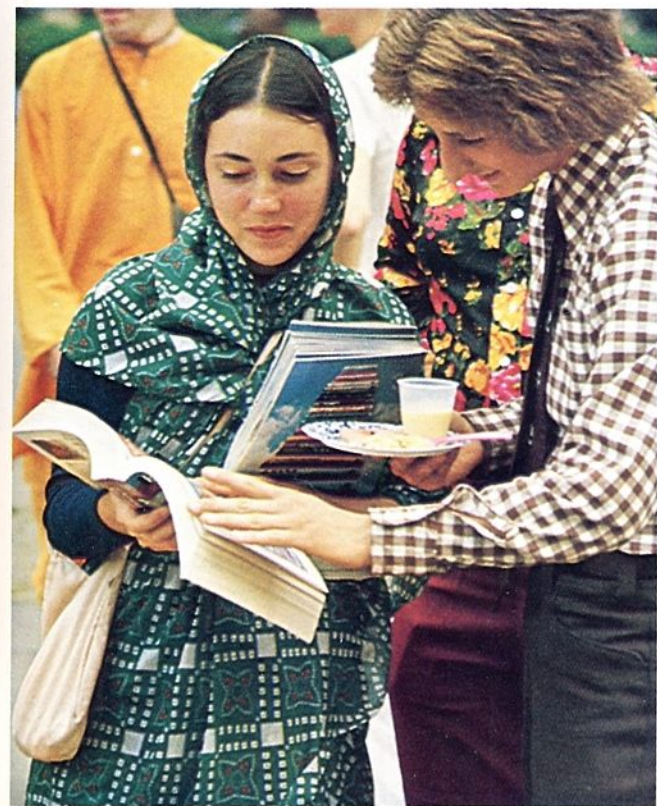
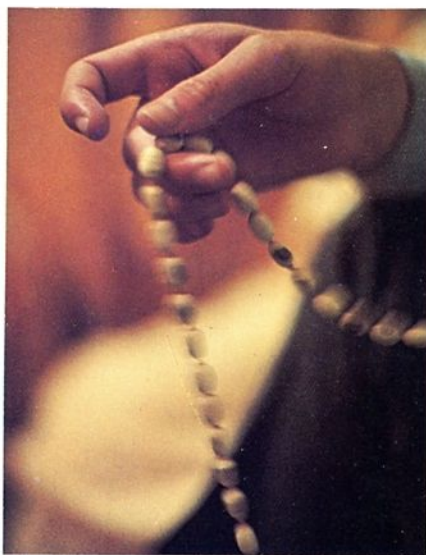


Photo: Jeffrey Dunan

Far left: As one gradually progresses, he wants not only to read spiritual books but to associate with those who understand and follow the instructions of the books. Left and below: Every day, thousands of people come in touch with Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the first time. Below, right: One who is interested in becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious learns how to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra on beads for personal meditation.



Photo: Yadvavara dāsa



coming initiated by the spiritual master and learning from him how to discharge devotional service, and (3) obeying the orders of the spiritual master with faith and devotion. From reading or from hearing lectures, one may also learn this verse from the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*: "To learn that transcendental science, one must approach a bona fide spiritual master who appears in the disciplic succession and who is fixed in the truth." Or this famous quotation from *Bhagavad-gītā*: "Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively. . ."

Friendship with the devotees is one thing, but approaching the spiritual

master means surrendering to him and following his instructions. Is the candidate ready to do it? He becomes thoughtful. According to the Vedic system, one should stay with a spiritual master for a year before deciding whether to accept him as one's *guru*, and the *guru* also should observe the candidate for a year to ascertain whether he is

eligible. Whether to surrender to a spiritual master is the most important choice in life, and it should be considered as thoroughly as possible. Having read some of the books and associated with devotees, one may consider his decision in this way: "I have heard from the Vedic literatures that I must take initiation. I must use this human life to go back to Godhead and become free from birth and death in the material world. I have heard it, but now what am I going to do about it?"

If one finds that he does not deeply desire to live in the Absolute Truth, he should not seek initiation from a spiritual master. If he is not serious, why make a superficial commitment to the spiritual path? Unfortunately, however, it has become fashionable to accept a spiritual master as one would accept a pet. Especially from India, many cheaters have come for those who are insincere about spiritual life but who want to be flattered that they are making spiritual advancement. They take to spiritual life as a kind of recreation. Nowadays we commonly hear how so-called *gurus* have taken money and cheated their disciples with bogus teachings. A serious candidate, therefore, may be hesitant about surrendering to a spiritual master, for he wants to be sure that he does not naively accept someone who will cheat him.

To find a real spiritual master is crucial. However, there is a standard way to ascertain who is a genuine *guru*. All the Vedic literature proclaims that the Absolute Truth is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa. As stated in the *R̥g Veda*, "Viṣṇu is the Supreme, and those who are godly think only of His lotus feet." Lord Viṣṇu, or Kṛṣṇa, is the ultimate object of all paths of meditation and *yoga*. The spiritual master, therefore, is one who preaches the message of Kṛṣṇa without adulteration. We have already quoted from *Bhagavad-gītā*, wherein Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself advises, "Try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master." In the verse after that, the Lord says, "And when you have learned the truth from the *guru*, you will know that all beings are but part of Me—and that they are in Me, and are Mine." If a so-called spiritual master does not present Kṛṣṇa as the highest

truth, if he changes the message originally spoken by Kṛṣṇa or if he concocts teachings of his own, he cannot be considered a genuine *guru*. To be genuine, the *guru* must follow the instructions of another genuine *guru* who comes in the disciplic succession from Kṛṣṇa. If one is sincere, the Lord, who is within everyone's heart, will guide him in taking the right step by approaching the genuine teacher, not a pretender. If one desires real spiritual life, Kṛṣṇa will help him. But if he wants something else, Kṛṣṇa may allow him to be cheated.

If one is convinced that he has indeed found a genuine spiritual master, the next step is to follow his instructions. Śrīla Prabhupāda's most basic request to everyone is that one chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. One need not be initiated to begin chanting. The chanting is recommended for everyone, in all circumstances. In fact, the scriptures recommend chanting the holy names of God as the only suitable means of God realization in our present age of quarrel and hypocrisy (Kali-yuga). The name of Kṛṣṇa is not different from Kṛṣṇa Himself, and therefore chanting brings one into direct contact with Kṛṣṇa. As stated in the scripture *Nārada-pañcarātra*, the syllables of the *mahā-mantra* contain all other *mantras* and the results of all other spiritual processes. The *mahā-mantra* may be sung with other devotees or chanted to oneself on *japa* beads, a string of 108 beads that devotees use for chanting. The process is to say the *mahā-mantra* while fingering each bead; chanting on 108 beads is called "chanting a round." In the beginning one should set himself a quota of a certain number of rounds daily, even if only one or two. Once having set that quota, he should never go below it. Initiated disciples agree to chant a minimum of sixteen rounds daily. In the beginning neophytes find it difficult to chant more than a couple of rounds daily, but in the highest stages pure devotees chant the holy names constantly, day and night, in the profound ecstasy of love of God.

In addition to chanting, Śrīla Prabhupāda asks his initiated students to strictly refrain from four major sinful activities: (1) illicit sex, (2) meat eating, (3) intoxication and (4) gambling. On the basis of knowledge alone, one should see



Photo: Muralidana dāsa

A morning philosophy class at the ISKCON temple in Los Angeles. (The Deity of the Lord is visible in the background.)

these activities as detrimental to his advancement. To actually give them up, however, one must feel a superior pleasure from transcendental consciousness. Most people indulge extensively in all four of these activities. Wherever we go we see advertisements for liquor and cigarettes, and nearly all advertising depends in some way upon sexual attraction. In today's culture, therefore, giving up these things requires a whole commitment. One has to decide if he really wants spiritual life, for there is no question of cultivating these sinful activities and at the same time advancing spiritually. Consequently one who is insincere will try to find some fault with spiritual advancement and will fall back into material desires, but one who sincerely chants Hare Kṛṣṇa will be freed from all misgivings and will then make rapid progress.

The prerequisites for initiation, therefore, are to chant sixteen rounds daily and follow the four rules.

If one takes to these principles, he usually decides he wants to live with devotees like himself. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness has therefore been formed so that devotees may live together, with Kṛṣṇa as the center of their lives. Their living together is not ordinary communal life. In all Kṛṣṇa temples the Deity of the Lord is installed, and by Kṛṣṇa's mercy wherever there is Deity worship Kṛṣṇa is actually present. The Deity worship is not idol worship, for it is authorized by

all Vedic scriptures; the Deity is as much Kṛṣṇa as is His name or His word. Thus devotees live in the temple as servants of the Lord, who is present in the Deity form. It is stated that to live in a brothel or bar is to live in the mode of ignorance; to live in the city, the mode of passion, and to live in the forest, the mode of goodness. But living in the temple of the Lord is transcendental, beyond all material modes.

Temple life has special potency because everything done in the temple is an act of *bhakti-yoga*, or devotional service to the Lord. All such acts are sanctified and free of *karma*, or material reactions. For example, the devotees eat only food first offered to Kṛṣṇa. Just by eating the remnants of such an offering, which are called *prasāda*, one advances toward the goal of life, love of God. Because the devotees in the temple, directed by a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa, thus act within the spiritual energy, although they may live in New York or London they are not actually anywhere within the material world; by virtue of their *bhakti* activities and consciousness, they are in the spiritual world. This is not to be known academically, but it is realized by devotees who live in association with the *mahā-mantra*, who eat Kṛṣṇa's *prasāda* and who work for Kṛṣṇa.

One may also live in his own home with his family and regular occupation, but by following the instructions of the spiritual master he can make his home as good as a temple, provided he follows

the same procedures. It is imperative for one who wants to be an initiated devotee to rise early in the morning, no later than 4 a.m., and, after bathing, to begin chanting and reading from books like *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Early rising and restriction of eating and material pleasure may seem pointless and troublesome for a materialist, but the devotee who wants initiation takes to these austerities with love and enthusiasm, and he feels happy results very quickly. The first result is that one becomes freed from material despondency and becomes jolly and hopeful about going back to Godhead.

One's initiation really takes place when one gains firm determination to dedicate his life to following the instructions of the spiritual master. His initiation ceremony, although very important, follows automatically once he decides to become a devotee and dedicate his life. After he begins sincere, regulative service, the day will surely come when the temple's leaders recommend him for initiation.

During the initiation ceremony, the

initiates come forward, one after another, and are personally handed beads upon which Śrīla Prabhupāda has chanted for sanctification. Śrīla Prabhupāda or the priest performing the ceremony asks each candidate if he knows the four rules and is willing to follow the requirements for daily chanting. The first initiation is technically called *hari-nāma* initiation, or initiation into the holy name. There are further initiations in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, such as brahminical initiation, which may be given one year after the first initiation, and initiation into the renounced order, but the *hari-nāma* initiation is sufficient in itself to bring one to the highest perfection of love of God; if the student will faithfully follow the spiritual master, nothing else is needed but *hari-nāma*.

To be effective, however, the chanting must be performed without offenses. *The Nectar of Devotion* lists the following ten offenses to be avoided while chanting: "1) To blaspheme the devotees who have dedicated their lives for propagating the holy name of the Lord. 2) To consider the names of the demigods like

Lord Śiva or Lord Brahmā to be equal to, or independent of, the name of Lord Viṣṇu. 3) To disobey the orders of the spiritual master. 4) To blaspheme the Vedic literature or literature in pursuance of the Vedic version. 5) To consider the glories of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa to be imagination. 6) To give some interpretation of the holy name of the Lord. 7) To commit sinful activities on the strength of the holy name of the Lord. (Because by chanting the holy name of the Lord one can be freed from all kinds of sinful reactions, it should not be taken that one may continue to act sinfully and after that chant Hare Kṛṣṇa to neutralize his sins. Such a dangerous mentality is very offensive and should be avoided.) 8) To consider the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa one of the auspicious ritualistic activities offered in the *Vedas* as fruitive activities (*karma-kāṇḍa*). 9) To instruct a faithless person about the glories of the holy name. (Anyone can take part in chanting the holy name of the Lord, but in the beginning one should not be instructed about the transcendental glories of the Lord. Those who are

(continued on page 28)

Śrīla Prabhupāda hands sanctified beads to a new initiate.



Taking Shelter of Lord Nityānanda

A song by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura
Explained in English

by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Five hundred years ago, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, appeared in West Bengal in the role of His own pure devotee—Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Lord Caitanya is considered the most munificent incarnation of Godhead because He made love for Kṛṣṇa easily available through the chanting of the mahā-mantra—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

When Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared as Lord Caitanya, His principal associate in spreading the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was Lord Nityānanda Prabhu. Lord Nityānanda is Lord Caitanya's expansion. In other words, He is nondifferent from Lord Caitanya. The same Supreme Lord appeared in different forms—as Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda—to bestow mercy upon the fallen souls of the material world. This song, therefore, describes the benefits of taking shelter of Lord Nityānanda Prabhu.

Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura was a great devotee and spiritual master in the disciplic chain coming down from Lord Caitanya. He has written many songs, and they are recognized as authoritative by all Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees. He sang these songs in simple Bengali language, but the purport—the deep meaning of his songs—is very significant. His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has therefore explained many of these songs in English and taught them to his disciples. (Cassette recordings of Śrīla Prabhupāda singing and explaining these songs are available from Golden Avatar Productions in Los Angeles.)



This is a very nice song sung by Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura. He advises that *nitāi-pada*, the lotus feet of Lord Nityānanda (*kamala* means lotus, and *pada* means feet), are a shelter where one will get the soothing moonlight not only of one but of millions of moons. We can just imagine the aggregate total value of the soothing shine of millions of moons. In this material world (*jagat*), which is progressing

toward hell, there is always a blazing fire, and everyone is struggling hard without finding peace; therefore, if the world wants to have real peace, it should take shelter under the lotus feet of Lord Nityānanda, which are cooling like the shining of a million moons. *Juḍāya* means relief. If one actually wants relief from the struggle of existence and actually wants to extinguish the blazing fire of material pangs, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura advises, "Please take shelter of Lord Nityānanda."

What will be the result of accepting the shelter of the lotus feet of Lord Nityānanda? He says, *hena nitāi vine bhāi*: unless one takes shelter under the shade of the lotus feet of Lord Nityānanda, *rādhā-kṛṣṇa pāite nāi*—it will be very difficult for him to approach Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. The aim of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is to enable us to approach Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and associate with the Supreme Lord in His sublime pleasure dance. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura advises that if one actually wants to enter into the dancing party of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, he must accept the shelter of the lotus feet of Lord Nityānanda.

Then he says, *se sambandha nāhi*. *Sambandha* means "connection" or "contact." Anyone who has not contacted a relationship with Nityānanda is understood to have spoiled his human birth. In another song also Narottama dāsa says, *hari hari viphalē janama goñāinu*: anyone who does not approach Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa through a relationship with Nityānanda has uselessly spoiled his life. *Bṛthā* means "useless." *Janma* means "life." *Tāra* means "his," and *sambandha* means "relationship." Anyone who does not make a relationship with Nityānanda is simply spoiling the boon of his human form of life. Why is he spoiling it? *Sei paśu baḍo durācāra*. *Sei* means "that," *paśu* means "animal," and *durācāra* means "misbehaved" or "the most misbehaved." Without elevation to Kṛṣṇa consciousness through the mercy of Lord

*nitāi-pada-kamala, koṭi candra-suśīta,
ye chāyāya jagat juḍāya
hena nitāi vine bhāi, rādhā-kṛṣṇa pāite nāi,
dṛḍha kori dharo nitāi pāy*

*se sambandha nāhi yāra, br̥thā janma gela tāra,
sei paśu baḍo durācāra
nitāi nā bolile mukhe, majilo soṁsāra-sukhe,
vidyā-kule ki koribe tāra*

*ahaṅkāre matta hoiñā, nitāi-pada pāsariyā,
asatyere satya kori māni
nitāira karuṇā habe, braje rādhā-kṛṣṇa pābe,
dharo nitāi-caraṇa du'khāni*

*nitāi-caraṇa satya, tāhāra sevaka nitya,
nitāi-pada sadā koro āśa
narottama baḍo dukhī, nitāi more koro sukhī,
rākha rāṅgā-caraṇera pāśa*



Photo: Gariyān dāsa

Caitanya and Nityānanda, life is simply spoiled for the animal propensities of sense gratification. Narottama dāsa says that ordinary animals can be tamed, but when a human being is animalistic, having only animal propensities, he is most horrible, for he cannot be tamed. Ordinary cats and dogs or even a tiger can be tamed, but when a human being goes out of his way and neglects to take to the human activity of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, his higher intelligence will simply be misused for animal propensities, and it is very difficult to tame him. The enactment of state laws cannot make a thief an honest man; because his heart is polluted, he cannot be tamed. Every man sees that a person who commits criminal offenses is punished by the government, and also in scriptural injunctions punishment in hell is mentioned. But despite hearing from scripture and seeing the action of the state laws, the demoniac cannot be tamed.

What are they doing? *Nitāi nā bolilo mukhe*. Since they do not know who Nityānanda is, they never say the names of Lord Nityānanda and Lord Caitanya. *Majilo soṁsāra-sukhe*. *Majilo* means "becomes absorbed."

They become absorbed in so-called material enjoyment. They don't care who Lord Caitanya and Nityānanda are, and therefore they go deep down into material existence. *Vidyā-kule ki koribe tāra*: if one has no connection with Nityānanda, and if he does not come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, his *vidyā*, or his so-called academic education, and *kule*, birth in a high family or great na-

tion, will not protect him. Regardless of whether one is born in a very big family or nation or has a very advanced academic education, at the time of death nature's law will act, his work will be finished, and he will get another body according to that work.

Why are these human animals acting in this way? *Ahaṅkāre matta hoiñā, nitāi-pada pāsariyā*. They have become maddened by a false concept of bodily life, and thus they have forgotten their eternal relationship with Nityānanda. *Asatyere satya kori māni*: such forgetful persons accept the illusory energy as factual. *Asatyere* refers to that which is not a fact, or, in other words, *māyā*. *Māyā* means that which has no existence but is a temporary illusion only. Persons who have no contact with Nityānanda accept this illusory body as factual.

Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura then says, *nitāira karuṇā habe, braje rādhā-kṛṣṇa pābe*: "If you actually want to approach the association of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, you must achieve the mercy of Lord Nityānanda first. When He is merciful toward you, then you will be able to approach Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa." *Dharo nitāi-caraṇa du'khāni*. Narottama dāsa advises that one firmly catch the lotus feet of Lord Nityānanda.

Then again he says, *nitāi-caraṇa satya*. One should not misunderstand and think that as he caught hold of *māyā*, similarly the lotus feet of Nityānanda may also be something like that *māyā*, or illusion. Therefore Narottama dāsa confirms, *nitāi-caraṇa*

satya: the lotus feet of Nityānanda are not illusion; they are a fact. *Tāhāra sevaka nitya*: and one who engages in the transcendental loving service of Nityānanda is also transcendental. If one engages in the transcendental loving service of Nityānanda in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he immediately achieves his transcendental position on the spiritual platform, which is eternal and blissful. Therefore he advises, *nitāi-pada sadā koro āśa*: always

try to catch the lotus feet of Lord Nityānanda.

Narottama baḍo dukhī, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, the ācārya, is taking the position that he is very unhappy. Actually, he is representing ourselves. He says, "My dear Lord, I am very unhappy." *Nitāi more koro sukhī*: "Therefore I am praying to Lord Nityānanda to make me happy." *Rākha rāṅgā-caraṇera pāśa*. "Please keep me in a corner of Your lotus feet." ❧

Initiation (continued from page 25)



too sinful cannot appreciate the transcendental glories of the Lord, and therefore it is better not to instruct them in this matter.) 10) To not have complete faith in the chanting of the holy names and to maintain material attachments, even after understanding so many instructions on this matter." Anyone serious about becoming a devotee of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement should be careful to avoid these ten offenses.

As for the spiritual name given at the time of initiation, it is usually a name of Kṛṣṇa or one of His devotees. The name is always affixed with the word "*dāsa*" for men, or "*devī dāsi*" for women, both of which mean "servant." One is not given the name "Kṛṣṇa," "Govinda" or "Caitanya," but "Kṛṣṇa dāsa," "Govinda-devī dāsi" or "Caitanya dāsa," indicating that the initiate is not God Himself but a humble servant of God. (Bogus spiritual masters make the great mistake of simply giving their disciples names of God, such as Govinda or Nārāyaṇa, without indicating that the

disciple is a servant of Govinda or Nārāyaṇa. Thus the unfortunate followers think that by becoming initiated they have somehow become as good as God.) As the *guru* is the real eternal father, so the spiritual name he gives his disciple is an eternal name by which the spiritual master and Godbrothers and God sisters know the disciple.

After each initiate has been given his beads and spiritual name, he sits down, and the priest, under the guidance of Śrīla Prabhupāda, continues the ceremony. After spreading colored dyes over the dirt mound in decorative crisscrosses and building a small fire, the priest begins chanting *mantras* glorifying the past spiritual masters in the succession from Kṛṣṇa Himself. The priest and devotees chant responsively, and at the end of each verse the priest pronounces the word "*svāhā*," which indicates the offering of oblations. Handfuls of sesame and barley mixed with clarified butter have been handed to the initiates, other devotees and guests, and when the priest says "*svāhā*" and pours a ladle of clarified butter into the fire, everyone throws grains into the fire as well. This simple procedure surcharges everyone present with spiritual happiness, and it is better experienced than described in words. Formerly such sacrifices were held on a grand scale, with tons of grains and clarified butter offered into the sacrificial fire. But this present age, Kali-yuga, finds mankind short in natural resources, and so a token amount of grain and butter is offered. The primary sacrifice for this age, however, is the congregational chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, and therefore we need not lament for our lack of huge amounts of grains to offer in sacrifice. If there were no other paraphernalia but the holy name, it would still be complete, and without the holy name the sacrifice would be only a false show.

After all the *mantras* are chanted, the priest announces, "*kīrtana!*" ("Chant-

ing!"). Immediately *mṛdaṅga* players start striking their drums, *karatāla* players beat their brass hand cymbals, and a lead singer begins melodiously singing the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. Congregational chanting with the participation of many devotees thus becomes the ultimate perfection of the initiation sacrifice. This chanting process is so auspicious that it is envied by denizens of higher planets, even though they have all the material wealth and knowledge for opulent sacrificial ceremonies. Nevertheless, a Vedic ceremony is considered incomplete without distribution of *prasāda*, food offered to Kṛṣṇa, and so the initiation ceremony is also an occasion for full, sumptuous feasting for all who attend.

In summary, the initiation ceremony, far from being merely a colorful ritual, is a necessity for genuine spiritual life. Although everyone, even if not initiated, is encouraged to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and will receive spiritual benefit if he does so, unless one is initiated by a genuine spiritual master he will not receive the spiritual strength to remain steady in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and following spiritual principles, and after some time he may slide down again to material consciousness. The non-initiate is sometimes compared to a student who is allowed to sit in on a professor's class but who has not officially registered for the course. Although such a student may benefit by auditing the class, he must formally join the class if he wishes to receive college credit. Similarly, only when one is initiated does he become eligible for the full benefits of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, for then his link to Kṛṣṇa is established, through his own spiritual master and all the great spiritual masters of the past. Then, by implicit faith in his own spiritual master and in Lord Kṛṣṇa, all the truths of the Vedic literature are revealed to him. This is the path for the serious candidate on the path of spiritual perfection. ❧



Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and false ego—these are the eight inferior energies of Kṛṣṇa that make up the material world.

But beyond these material energies is Kṛṣṇa's superior energy, consisting of the living beings who are struggling with material nature and who are sustaining the universe.

There is more to a person than just the outward material body. And then, too, there is even more than the mind and intellect. Within the body and mind is that intangible "something," that spiritual force that gives life to this material universe. But what is that spiritual energy within us? Where does it come from? Where is it going? If you've ever asked yourself these questions, you'll find this book uniquely valuable.

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—Dr. Alex Wayman, Professor of Sanskrit Columbia University



"This beautiful Bhāgavatam, compiled by the great sage Śrī Vyāsadeva, is sufficient in itself for God realization. As soon as one attentively and submissively hears the message of Bhāgavatam, he becomes attached to the Supreme Lord."

श्रीमद्भगवत